

Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-06 ADP-00 SSO-00 PRS-01 (ADP) W

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P R 091315Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6837

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

INFO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, BU, US

SUBJECT: U.S. BASKETBALL TEAM

USIA FOR IEE; STATE FOR CU/IAP/SMITH

1. U.S. BASKETBALL TEAM'S INITIAL REACTION TO BULGARIA AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS PROVIDED BY BULGARIAN BASKETBALL FEDERATION WAS EXTREMELY, AND UNFORTUNATELY VOCALLY, NEGATIVE.

2. AFTER ARRIVING TWO HOURS LATE FROM PRAGUE AND BEING REQUIRED TO PAY SEVEN DOLLAR PER PERSON VISA FEE AT AIRPORT, WHICH THEY HADN'T EXPECTED, TEAM WAS TAKEN TO DIANA HOTEL AT BULGARIAN NATIONAL SPORTS CENTER WHERE BULGARIAN AND YUGOSLAV (ONLY OTHER FOREIGN TEAM IN TOURNAMENT) TEAMS ARE ALSO HOUSED. TEAM COACHES PRONOUNCED THE ACCOMMODATIONS UNACCEPTABLE AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS DESPITE EMBOFF'S EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THEM THAT NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SUCH REJECTION OF BULGARIAN BASKETBALL FEDERATION'S HOSPITALITY WOULD EFFECTIVELY CANCEL ANY POSSIBLE POSITIVE IMPRESSION THEIR BULGARIAN PROGRAM MIGHT HAVE CREATED AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS COULD BE FOUND SINCE ALL HOTELS IN SOFIA ARE CURRENTLY FULLY BOOKED AT HEIGHT OF TOURIST SEASON.

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3. COACHES APPRECIATE PROBLEMS THEIR ACTIONS WILL CAUSE

EMBASSY RE BULGARIAN SPORTS WORLD BUT INSIST THEIR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE TO DELIVER TEAM IN TOP FORM, MENTALLY AS WELL AS PHYSICALLY, IN MOSCOW FOR WORLD UNIVERSITY GAMES AND THAT THIS NOT POSSIBLE IF TEAM FORCED TO SPEND FOUR NIGHTS WHERE THEY ARE, CLAIMING TEAM WAS UNABLE TO SLEEP ALL LAST NIGHT.

4. TO MINIMIZE TIME TEAM MUST STAY IN ACCOMMODATIONS THEY FIND SUBSTANDARD, COACHES HAVE INFORMED BULGARIANS TEAM CANNOT REMAIN IN SOFIA TO PLAY "FRIENDLY GAME" AGAINST BULGARIAN ALLSTARS SCHEDULED AUGUST 12 AFTER TOURNAMENT ENDS BUT MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY FOR MOSCOW.

5. ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY SOMEWHAT DIRTIER THAN MOST, WITH OLDER AND SAGGIER BEDS, THE DIANA HOTEL IS STANDARD BULGARIAN HOTEL WITH APPOINTMENTS AND AMENITIES, OR LACK THEREOF, ALSO STANDARD.

6. EMBASSY ATTEMPTING TO MOLLIFY OFFENDED BULGARIAN SPORTS OFFICIALS AND HELP TEAM FIND ALTERNATIVE HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS (BELIEVE EMB CAN FIND ALTERNATIVE). MOLLIFYING GOB OFFICIALS MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT.

7. FOR MOSCOW: PLEASE ADVISE U.S. COLLEGIATE SPORTS COUNCIL PRESIDENT NICK RHODIS IN MOSCOW FOR WORLD UNIVERSITY GAMES THAT TEAM WILL ARRIVE MOSCOW AUGUST 12, REPEAT AUGUST 12, AT 1235 HOURS VIA LZ-307 INSTEAD OF AUGUST 13 AS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED.

HOUSTON

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